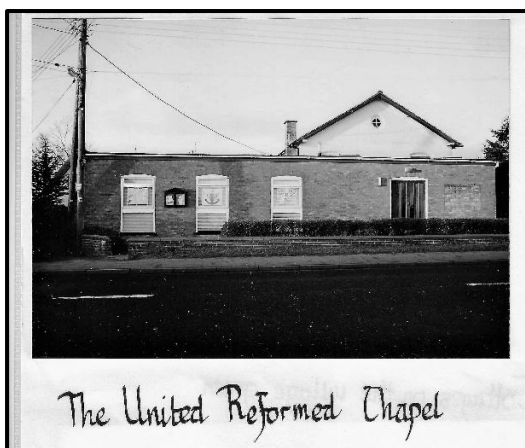




Our first meeting in 2026 is on **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February**. Please remember our new meeting venue is the URC Hall, car parking is available across the road, just remember a torch may be useful. We still start at 7.30 and refreshments will be available.



URC as it appeared at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Congregational Chapel as it looked in the 1930s.

Our February topic is the **Orchards of Suffolk** with Gerry Barnes. Today's orchards are but a shadow of their former selves. The mid 19<sup>th</sup> century tithe records remind us that across Stowupland there were many areas of orchards. Some small others larger but their loss in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had impacts on our village's biodiversity, the trees and their fruit were vital to the life cycles of so much wildlife, be it large or small.

Then on **March 4<sup>th</sup>**, we continue our Stowupland Stories examining **Our Spaces for Learning**. Most of us know that our village school dates from the 1860s but prior to that many people learnt to read and write in Sunday Schools. See the following article on the life of Edmund Robinson.

Neil came across these **Reminiscences of Stowupland** in the **9<sup>th</sup> of December 1917, Stowmarket Weekly Post**. It gives us insight into what life was like for ordinary folk in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *(I have added a few notes to help put things into context.)*

In a thatched cottage on the left of the highway a short distance away from Stowupland Parish Church resides two of Stowupland's oldest inhabitants, Mr. and Mrs Edmund Robinson. The father of Edmund was William Robinson, who was a horse man for a great many years for the late Charles Rayner Freeman, of Stowupland Hall {around the 1840s}, and when he died, he was 84 years of age. Mrs. Robinson lived to the good old age of 83 years.

Edmund Robinson is one of a family of thirteen - seven sons and six daughters. *{William Robinson was born in the early 1800s, he married Amy in 1830, by the age of 67 he is recorded in the census as being disabled but still an ag lab. In 1871 their youngest child Emily is recorded as a scholar.}* In addition to Edmund, there is a son named Thomas, who lives at Ipswich, and four daughters living. One of the daughters is Mrs. Emily Abbott, of Union Street. Stowmarket another daughter is Mrs. Sarah Brame, of Earl Stonham, and two other daughters are Mrs. Allard, of Bildeston, and Mrs. Rose Lockwood, of Saxon Street {Saxham Street}, Stowupland.

Edmund Robinson was born {in 1834} in the thatched cottage in which he now lives. As soon as he was old enough, he was sent to Stowupland Hall, and assisted Mr. Charles Rayner Freeman who was

deaf, and for whom he acted as interpreter about the Hall, and also made his business journeys in his horse and gig to the different farmhouses in the village.

There was a cottage school in the house now occupied by Mr. Hitchcock, and the teacher was the wife of a ploughman. For only one week did Edmund attend school, which was the only secular education he received {*our local school opened in the mid-1860s*}. There was a Congregational Sunday School held in the two cottages that adjoin his home. Mr. George Stevens, a brewer, of Stowmarket, was the superintendent of the Sunday School. There was a little pulpit, and Mr. Stevens would preach on a Sunday evening, and there were good congregations, and the building was often filled with worshippers. The Sunday School was lighted with candles, and they employed a "candle snuffer." Stands were fixed in the wall to hold the candles. In the Sunday School the work was confined to Scripture lessons and singing of hymns. Mr. John Stevens, a brother of Mr. George Stevens, came and preached. The Sunday School had at that time been established many years.

Through the efforts of Mr. Thomas Prentice, of Stowmarket, the present Congregational Chapel was erected. The Sunday School was continued for some time after the chapel was built, and was afterwards removed w there. The old cottages in which the Sunday school was held were purchased by Mr. F. Harwood, of Tuddenham Hall, and they were converted into cottages. The old windows were taken out only about two years ago.

As a horseman his father was paid 12s. a week, and he had the rent to pay. The labourers were paid 10s., and the stockmen 9s. a week. There were five or six boys running about the farm, and each boy was paid 2d. a day. They swept the yards, fed the cattle, and worked on the land. He well remembered the Crimean War. Flour was 4s. a stone. There was plenty of butter and milk, and eggs were 16 a shilling. Tea was 4d. an ounce. There was not anything much else but dry bread. They started work in the spring and summer months at 6 a.m., and worked till 6 p.m. He had often to go without any food, because he could not buy it. There was no money to buy food, and people would not trust them. Matches were scarce. In those days the tinder box was in vogue. He thought that the tinder box would he brought into use again.

He remembers the Parish Church being opened. The Bishop was present and there were coaches and carriages in large numbers from many miles around. At Christmas the men employed at Stowupland Hall were given a dinner. There were few holidays, but once a year the villagers went to Stowmarket Fair. It opened on July 10th and lasted three days. The fair was held on Capt. Longe's land. There were stalls galore, shows, giants and fat women, dancing girls, boxing booths, and other attractions on the meadow behind Messrs. Preston Bros. establishment. The first day was the great day. The second day was "Women's Day" and earthenware covered the ground. The fair was a great event for the farmers and farm workers, who rode in their carts to Stowmarket. There were many fights, and a good deal of blood was shed in the streets.

He had been out of doors in all kinds of weather. The weather in his younger days was more severe than it is today. He had known the time when the horses were waiting at the drinking trough at Stowupland Hall, and they had to fetch hatchets to break in the ice for the animals to drink.

He has three sons— Councillor David Robinson, who is employed by the Stowmarket Timber Co. Councillor Nathan Robinson, another son, employed on Government work. Prvt. George Robinson is another son, and is in the Army as a driver in the Royal Engineers, and joined the Army on November 20, 1915, He was employed by Mr. F. Gammer, butcher, of Stowmarket, for 14 yrs. Since he left for the Army he has not been home.

Mr. Edmund Robinson attributes his long life to his robust constitution but admits that he has had plain food and plenty of fresh air which have been conducive to his vitality. Stowupland, he said, was a healthy resort. Mr. William Prentice, of Ipswich, former schoolmaster in the village, told him that no one had any need to go out of Stowupland for the benefit of his or her health. Edmund Robinson worked for Mr. C. R. Freeman about twenty years then he worked for Mr. Pyman, of Park Farm: from there he went to Creeting Hall for about a year the only time he went to work outside – his native village. For about 15 years he was with Mr. Robert Boby, of Columbine Hall, and for 23 years he was employed by Mr. John Stearn of Crown Farm. He took in first harvest when he was 19 years of age, and his last when he was over sixty. He continued at work until he was 65, and only gave up about twelve years since because of an attack of rheumatism in his leg. Even at the age of 77 years he looks after two plots of garden land, one of 14 rods, and another of 13 rods, his son, Councillor Nathan Robinson, giving him help occasionally. Wet or fine, his son, Councillor George Robinson, pays him a visit on Sundays. There were as many as ten harvestmen taken on. The pay was £5 for the harvest and 2 and half bushels of malt, boys were allowed two 2 pecks of malt.

Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Robinson celebrated their 51st year of their married life on Nov. 15th last. They were married at the Stowupland Congregational Chapel. It may seem strange to many that Mr. Edmund Robinson remembers having been Christened. That day is one he well recalls. He was a boy worker on the land when he was christened. Dod Girle when asked "What are we made in baptism?" replied "Disagreeably wet." There were six christened on the same day at Stowupland as the boy Edmund. Well does he remember taking his position on his knees on a chair, his head just above the upright. Six of them sat in that position and faced the minister. Then the rev. gentleman of the cloth came forward and Edmond's turn came to be sprinkled. "What did you think of it" asked our representative of the old gentleman "I wasn't very sweet on it" he replied.

Active with a clear brain and wonderful memory Mr Edmund Robinson looked well and maybe he and his pleasant mannered wife have many happy days below the thatched roof cottage with its gardens and pleasant surroundings.

**Jerry's review of November's "Stowupland Stories"** which was given by Sandra Walker and Neil Langridge gave us an insight into "Crime and Punishment" in the village and surrounding Area".

As you will be reading this in the February 2026 Telstar, may I wish all our readers a happy New Year. For those of you who saw the Christmas edition of Telstar, you will have seen that Sandra wrote about some of the nefarious activities of past residents of "Myrtle Cottages". To use Sandra's words a contemporary press report of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century arrest of a pair of poultry thieves read like 'an episode of the modern-day Police drama'.

However, I will follow on as there were one or two other incident's we can highlight in the Crime part of this. Please note this was the third in our popular series of Stowupland village talks. Both Sandra and Neil have put a lot of research to be able to complete these sessions, so thank you to both of you. So what else was happening around and about as we took a step back in time.

Neil started off the evening with some punishments that were handed down, in the fourteenth century, when the Lord of the Manor ruled his lands and had the power to hand out punishments to those folk who lived on his land. Neil had uncovered evidence that there may have been a gallows site somewhere around the area of Stowupland. Stealing from the Lord of the manor was certainly unwise if caught out.

After an interval for refreshments, thanks to Liz and Annie, Sandra brought us more up to date with some 19<sup>th</sup> century crimes.

Where was it all happening in the village? “Some things don’t change much” as the area around the village green was a site for various criminal activities, for instance, in August 1900 there was a press report that four people were fined for the following offences:

- John Steadman a local farmer was fined for allowing two horses to stray onto the highway,
- Joseph Berry, a labourer for allowing a horse to stray.
- Harry Neale, a baker had unfortunately allowed a horse to stray on the highway.
- Ann Allard was also in the frame and got nicked for allowing her donkey to stray on the highway.

Each were fined 2 shillings and 6 pence (half a crown in old money), which to all concerned would have been a lot of money in those days. Today’s modern-day equivalent may be speeding which is always a conversation stopper. It is to be noted that in these days our green would have had farm animals on it as the local farmers had grazing rights, as some still do today.

Also of note was a case brought against John Robinson of the Parish of Stowupland, in the county of Suffolk. John was a labourer and is said to have made use of some expressions tending to injure the character of a Mr William Cooper (then of Sheepcote Hall), of Stowupland aforesaid, farmer; however, he denied making the accusation, and denied these reports which he said had been fabricated by some evil-disposed persons and attributed to him.

Thomas Race stole two pieces of Applewood belonging to a Lord of the Manor (Mr C. R. Rayner of Stowupland Hall) he was sentenced to six months hard labour. George Southgate was sentenced to seven years for stealing flour and the keys to the mill. These are just a few examples shared to the group, but they certainly suggested how hard life was in those days and looking at some of the sentences handed down for the crimes, it certainly seemed that crimes did not pay.

Neil and Sandra answered questions from our audience and were thanked for their efforts in giving the talk, and there was a lot more content in this talk than I can record here.

We are now asking members to renew their membership for 2026. Annual membership is just £15:00 then £2:00 per meeting. Whilst we welcome visitors at any of our sessions why not make a regular commitment. What is stopping you?

**Do you have stories to share or prefer to listen?**

***SLHG* welcomes Visitors to our meetings, just pay £5.00 on the door.**

**If you have any queries about joining us or Stowupland’s past:**

**Please contact Jerry Voden on 01449 703717 or**

**[secretary@stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org](mailto:secretary@stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org)**

Or visit our website: **[www.stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org](http://www.stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org)**

*Where you can listen to Jerry Jabbas.*